

OLC 78-3029/b

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Office of Legislative Counsel
Washington, D. C. 20505

Telephone: [REDACTED]

29 September 1978

TO: Mr. Thomas K. Latimer
Permanent Select Committee
on Intelligence

Dear Tom:

I am forwarding a paper on the "History of Watch Officer Recruitment, Rotation and Handling -- Period 1973-1978." I think that you will find the paper helpful in understanding the staffing of the Operations Center.

With regard to the question about employees within the Operations Center receiving notably low or "warning" ratings, there has only been one person to have received this sort of rating in the past several years.

Sincerely,

/s/
Frederick P. Hitz
Legislative Counsel

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FORM 1533 OBSOLETE
6-68 PREVIOUS EDITIONS

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Distribution

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- 1 - Vince J. Heyman (D/OPS)
- 1 - OLC Subject
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OLC:MMP:sf (29 September 1978)

SUBJECT: History of Watch Officer Recruitment, Rotation, and Handling--
Period 1973-1978

BACKGROUND

Given the relatively late emergence of Operations Centers as significant players in the current intelligence field it was not unusual in the pre-1973 timeframe to find that watch personnel were usually recruited from among the ranks of those individuals who had had or were having difficulty in making the grade as full fledged analysts in their respective organizations. This was the case with the OCI Watch Office, the predecessor organization to the CIA Operations Center. The personnel structure, however, showed a marked difference of quality between the rotating middle grade analysts serving as Senior Duty Officers and the then watch officers whose functions were quasi-clerical, whose access to real-time intelligence information was limited and whose quality was mixed.

TRANSITION 1973-1974

It was partially this situation that led the then DCI Colby to convene a Working Group to study the entire question of Operations Centers and Information Flows--both in a CIA and in a community context.

25X1 This group of CIA senior officials brought forth its report in April 1973, which was approved by the CIA Management Committee in June 1973. A new chief was brought to head a CIA Operations Center in August 1973.

The Working Group Study called for significant changes in the way the Agency organized itself to handle its critical and current intelligence business and inter alia mandated:

--that the new Center be "all Agency" and that the various existing directorate centers be merged with it;

--that henceforth all electrical traffic come directly to the Operations Center rather than through the Signal Center to be "tubed" to the Center;

--that significantly expanded space, billets and funds be given to the Center in order to enable it to become a modern, responsive organization.

In March 1974 it became a separate office under the DDI enabling its management to begin directly to implement the recommendations of the Working Group and address the Center's most fundamental issue, the quality of its watch officers and the limited scope of their mandate.

"WATCH" PERSONNEL IMPROVEMENT--1974-1978

Proceeding from the recognition that the supervision of the "Watch", i.e., by the Senior Duty Officer (experienced analysts on two-year rotation tours from other CIA offices) was adequate, emphasis was given to evaluating the existing watch officers and determining how their ranks could be improved and expanded.

This effort had two parallel aspects--to rotate selected watch personnel to gain deeper substantive experience and to inaugurate a recruitment program to both fill the billets of these departing personnel, as well as the additional billets given to the Center as a result of the Working Group Study charter.

Taking the recruitment effort first several factors should be set forth to explain why internal recruitment, with the emphasis on quality, was doomed from the beginning:

--except for the SDOs, the fact that the "pre-1973 Watch" had become a haven for mediocre personnel was well established in CIA lore;

--a good part of the watch officer function was known to be quasi-clerical;

--the grade levels of the billets at that time ran from GS-05 to GS-10;

--the shift work problem.

Faced with qualitative needs and limited internal ability to satisfy them an external recruitment program was inaugurated in 1974 with two goals in mind:

--to satisfy the Center's new qualitative standards for manning the "Watch;"

--to develop a career chain beginning in the Watch leading to an analytical or other more senior position after two years or so.

To a very large extent we have succeeded too well. Increasingly, the excellent young people we have brought in have been in high demand. The attachment shows the rotation and status of our watch officer personnel since 1973. Those with an asterisk are still with us. As a result the average tour of watch officers has been slightly less than two years in the period 1974-1978. In mitigation of this, however, their immediate superiors, the head of the watch team, our Senior Watch Officers, average 9 years of service with CIA, the large majority of this time in an Operations Center environment.

Lastly, it should be noted that only one member of the group hired in 1977 is no longer with us. To our knowledge we have experienced no other serious disagreement with those who have left our ranks over recent years. Those few who were moved along in the 1973-1974 timeframe did so with good grace and a recognition that the move was in their interests as well. None were in danger of actually being discharged as was the particular case at hand.

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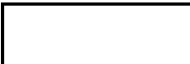

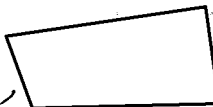
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TO :  FPH		DATE OF REQUEST
FROM : 		SUSPENSE DATE
SUBJECT: 2 OCT 1978		
Forwarding "History of Watch Officer Recruitment, Rotation and Handling--Period 1973-1978" to Tom Latimer		
NOTES		
<p>Fred:</p> <p>I did not think that the attached paper quite addressed Mr. Mazzoli's question directly enough -- so after talking with Vince Heyman, I stated the answer in somewhat more direct terms (still stopping short of spelling out precisely who we are all talking about, since it is my understanding that we are supposed to handle this case that way).</p> <p><i>Note:</i> <i>Please make sure  gets a copy of the attached.</i></p>		
COORDINATED WITH (list names as well as offices)		
NAME	OFFICE	DATE
Vince J. Heyman	D/OPS	29 Sept 78
NAME	OFFICE	DATE
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ACTION REQUIRED BY 616 XXXX FPH		
Signature		
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The Operations Center

OLC #183029/14

19 September 1978

NOTE FOR: Legislative Counsel

25X1 The attached is a study I did at the request of [redacted] of the Office of Security which I gathered you funnelled through him. While I have no problems in responding to the request, I hope what the attached contains is what was asked for and that nothing has been lost by going through that channel.

Please let me know if this is what Tom Latimer is looking for and if not I think we ought to talk about it directly.

25X1 [redacted]
Director

25X1 [redacted]